

# The Lord's Way

*Bud Morris*

Jim Haynes wasn't exactly a big man. He might have made five feet ten inches tall if you pulled his leg right hard, but at first glance that didn't appear to be a healthy option. It's not that he looked mean, but he was built on a heavy-duty frame that carried nearly two-hundred-and-fifty pounds of solid muscle. Still, the man was soft spoken with a ready grin on his face.

Jim had arrived at Lucky Strike in the spring, with a Conestoga load of tools and hardware. It was pulled by four huge draft horses. After spending the better part of a day perusing the dry goods store and other business that sprawled along the main dirt road through town, he purchased three adjacent lots in the business district. The next day he began cutting hefty cedar logs from the mountainside and dragging them to his building site with his horses. Come fall, he traded tools for labor and erected his building on the middle lot, leaving plenty of room for a fire-break between his log building and the unpainted cedar frame buildings on either side of him.

As the structure went up, Jim divided it into two parts by interlocking a wall of the same hefty construction into one of the sidewalls about three quarters of the way to the back of the building. He interlocked this wall to another one like it that was interlocked with the back of the building, leaving a hallway to the back door along the opposite sidewall from his living quarters. Outside the back door stood two appropriately labeled outhouses of rough-sawn cedar, with a privacy wall in between. He painted one pink and the other blue.

After the building was roofed, the entrepreneur produced two four-foot by eight-foot drawn glass windows from his Conestoga, which were installed along the boardwalk to display his goods. Rumor had it that he carried the cast iron stove he would use to heat the building in from his wagon singlehandedly with apparent ease. He also put a small cook stove with an oven in the back room that was to serve as his living quarters

Jim dug a well near the boardwalk on one of his side lots before the ground froze for the winter. It would not only supply his own needs, but would also provide drinking water for passersby and a convenient source of water for a nearby public watering trough for horses. He placed a couple of picnic tables near the well for the public to use. And one dark night he even slipped out and scattered a large assortment of native wildflower seeds that he had gathered during the growing season over both of his side lots. Finally, Jim placed a large sign above the front door, "HAYNES HARDWARE AND HARNESS;" and brought what remained of the contents of his wagon inside, displaying his hand tools in the windows.

Lucky Strike was originally a cow town along the transcontinental railroad. As its name implies, gold had also been discovered in the surrounding mountains, adding a strong mining contingent to the town's economy. The young businessman attended a town council meeting when his store was ready to go. Some members of the council expressed sincere concerns about possible competition with some of the struggling businesses in town. Jim laid these to rest satisfactorily.

"I didn't come to compete with this town's businesses, but to compliment them," he explained. "I checked every establishment in town, and none of them carries a significant stock in the kind of things I envision selling. I intend to specialize in tools, hardware, saddles, leather goods, farm implements, and

the like--that would otherwise be essentially unavailable in this community.” Having satisfied the town fathers of his non-subversive intentions, Jim contracted his big horses to them for snow plowing and road upkeep for the oncoming winter. The town would pay the hostler’s fees in exchange for the use of the horses until spring.

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Jim’s first winter at Lucky Strike proved to be exceptionally difficult. Deep snows and bitterly cold weather struck unrelentingly; and Jim seemed to be the only one capable of doing the snow plowing. He worked at it all alone with a willing grace and a cheerful face that endeared him to most of the town’s residents. Nor did the spring thaws bring Jim any relief. He put the snowplow away only to begin harrowing the deeply rutted road, often on a weekly basis. The road needed more gravel—lots more!

On the first balmy Sunday afternoon of spring, as Jim left the church he ambled on past his place to where the mountain-fed creek crossed the road at the edge of town. There he staked out a 160 acre homestead claim with the creek angling through the front corner of it. He received a lot of ribbing about getting married when he registered his claim, but truth was that he had no such plans in the foreseeable future. In his thoughts, he was still settling in.

As spring advanced, more and more shipments of farming and mining equipment arrived at the railroad freight office for Haynes Hardware. Everything from John Deere’s steel “Grasshopper” plows, mining jacks, stoves, and even a sewing machine or two began gracing Jim’s store. Misleading rumors of huge gold strikes brought a new influx of miners, and Jim was selling his inventory almost as soon as it reached the store.

The downside of the town’s economic surge was that gamblers, swindlers, and con artists descended on the community like vultures squabbling for a share of the gains. To top it all off, a bawdy house sprang up on the other end of the business district, across from the taverns, and increasingly more rowdiness was noticed at the taverns. Jim watched the moral decay with an aching heart.

Rev. James Lawrence, the town’s only minister, preached an angry denunciation of the town council the Sunday after the bawdy house opened. “Surely they had known what the new building was going to be used for. Why didn’t they do something to stop it? What kind of Christians were they, anyhow.” He called for a community meeting to straighten things out on Monday evening.

Monday’s meeting was attended by the staunch of the church, several of the town fathers, a few interested townspeople, the sheriff, and the tavern owners. The owner of the bawdy house came incognito. Rev. Lawrence pretty well repeated his angry denunciation of everyone who would not take a stand against allowing a bawdy house in the community. When he had finished, he challenged the president of the council to defend the council’s actions.

“Ladies and Gentlemen,” the councilmen began, “This council has refrained from forcing its preferences on the citizens of this town. We did not ask Jim Haynes what he was building, and we did not demand to know the purpose of the building now in question. If any illegal activities take place in any building in town, we will take appropriate measures to stop it. But quite frankly, Mr. Lawrence, a bawdy house is not illegal in this state at this time. Despite anyone’s opinion to the contrary, we cannot legally close this enterprise down.”

“Mr. Councilman,” Mr. Lawrence responded angrily, “If you and your cronies on the council are unwilling to stop this disgrace, you are duty bound to step down and let the citizens of this community elect a council that will shut it down. Whether you like it or not, we intend to take whatever measures are necessary to rid this community of this shameful blight. The government cannot force this travesty of our freedom upon us.”

The unknown owner of the bawdy house took the podium next. “Mr. Lawrence, the woman began, “You speak as though you represent the majority of citizens in this community. You do not. I would like to inform you that experience elsewhere assures me that my establishment will have more attendants from this community every day than your church will have on any given Sunday. Do the math, if you are capable. This means that seven times more citizens of this community want a gentlemen’s club than want a church. We have a product that men crave, and we are here to stay.”

The enraged minister quickly edged the woman away from the podium. “Madame,” he blustered with righteous indignation, “A woman of your morals has no right to darken the door of a church, much less presume to take the floor.”

“That’s hilarious,” the woman snickered, edging into the forefront again as she lifted her outstretched hands in an attempt to raise supporting laughter from the audience. Many preachers have visited my establishments elsewhere, and I’ll guarantee you that more men of your congregation than you would ever guess will sneak in to us after dark.”

When the Madame was stared down by the unsympathetic audience, she stomped loudly down the aisle and out the door.

The sheriff took the podium next. “Ladies and Gentlemen of Lucky Strike,” he began. “I want you to know that I am a Christian and I sympathize with the distaste many of you have for the establishment in question. Nonetheless, the councilman was absolutely right that we have no legal recourse by which to close the place down. Unfortunately, the Madame is probably correct in assuming that the Christian opposition to her establishment is the minority position. My suggestion is that unless you can find legal grounds to shut the bawdy house down, you restrict your opposition to prayer and evangelization in order to make the establishment an unprofitable venture. And let me inform you in no uncertain terms that I will arrest those who attempt to shut it down by illegal means just as readily as I arrest any other criminals. Pastor, would you please close this meeting with prayer for our community.

The deflated minister closed the meeting with a brief and rather petulant prayer, and the attendees walked out quietly with rather subdued expressions on their faces.

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The minister stormed into Jim’s store on Tuesday morning. “Why didn’t you support me at the meeting last night?” he demanded angrily of Jim. “Are you one of the churchgoers that will actually patronize that place?”

“No, Pastor,” Jim replied earnestly. “Although I’m just a newcomer here, my heart aches at the direction the town is moving. Unless something changes pretty soon, we will become a typical wicked frontier town.”

"You see it coming, and yet you don't support my efforts to nip the evil in the bud?" The preacher demanded accusingly. "Who's side are you on, anyway?"

"Pastor," Jim replied as a tear started down his usually cheerful face. "How much did you pray about your sermon last Sunday? How much did you pray before calling that meeting Monday night?"

"God appointed me as your Pastor, young man. Questioning me is questioning Him," the minister shot back. "This situation demands immediate action. We have to strike while the iron is hot."

"I'm sorry, Pastor," Jim replied. "As far as I can see, our meeting last night accomplished little for us. It polarized the council against us, and provided a platform for the Madame to point out that our assumption that Christians constitute a majority in this community is tenuous. I fear that she was right that more of the townspeople will frequent her establishment than will attend ours. I think the sheriff was right that prayer and evangelization that changes men's hearts will rein in the evil more than any amount of force will."

"So much for any help from you," the minister said bitterly as he turned on his heel and stalked away.

Right then and there Jim resolved to share the gospel of forgiveness of sins through repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ at every opportunity. "Conversion to Christ actually frees men from their wicked ways," he mused inwardly as he set about his work at the store.

When Jim consciously began to look for chances to share the gospel, he found that God would set him up with plenty of appropriate opportunities to share the gospel with others. A miner might recount a narrow escape from a cave-in, giving Jim a natural opportunity to ask him where he would be right now if he had died in the incident. Or a cowboy might share his awe of the great outdoors; and the Holy Spirit would prompt his willing servant to share the awesomeness of the Creator of the outdoors. But when Jim showed up at church on Sunday, he was turned away by the pastor, supported by the reproachful stares of the faithful followers that stood behind him.

Jim's enthusiastic evangelism brought little visible results for some time. The only thing that kept him at it was his growing enthusiasm for Christ. He soon found that he could scarcely refrain from talking about the Lord, because his mind was full of the greatness and love of Christ. Prayer and reading his Bible moved in his subconscious thought patterns from being a Christian duty to becoming a Christian privilege. He was the happiest he had ever been.

But Jim's work was not in vain. One day two miners and a cowboy came into the store at closing time. "We've been discussing what you have told us about God," they explained. "We would like to know Him like you do."

"Hang on while I lock up," Jim suggested. When the doors were locked and the cash placed in the safe, he led them into his living quarters in the back of the store. While they found makeshift seats around the table, Jim put the coffee pot on the stove. Soon they were in animated conversation over cups of strong black coffee that would have burned right through the stomach linings of less rugged individuals.

After a bit of congenial chatter and jovial joshing, Jim opened his Bible and reviewed the basic elements of the gospel of Christ with it. The universal sinfulness of the human heart, the righteousness of God

that must punish the sin, and the love of God that sent His own Son to bear our punishment on the cross. He finished up by pointing out that God had done all that could be done to pay the price for our sins, but if anyone refused to acknowledge his sinfulness and accept the payment, there was nothing left but to pay the price themselves in the eternal fires of hell.

Jim encouraged these men to breathe up a silent prayer of acceptance to God right there in their chairs. He advised them to kneel at their bedsides and confirm their repentance and faith in Christ when they got home. He also invited them back for a Bible study on Friday night, which he figured would be the most tempting time for them to return to a life of unbridled sin. When they were gone, Jim collapsed to his knees at his bedside, praying earnestly for help for these men to follow through with their good intentions.

Meanwhile, a member of the town council contacted an influential law firm back East by telegram. He was advised that the town could ban certain kinds of morally objectionable businesses if the electorate voted to do so. Rev. Lawrence immediately drew up a petition demanding a special election on the matter. Although no one personally approached Jim for his signature, a signature sheet showed up on his sales counter. After a couple days of prayerful consideration, Jim signed his name to the petition.

It only took a week for the petition to garner enough signatures to force a special election. Rev. Lawrence ramrodded it through the council despite the fact that regular elections were only two months away. Considerably less people voted for the ban than had signed the petition and the proposition was beaten by more than a two to one margin.

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Throughout most of the summer Jim was too busy at his store to start implementing the requirements for his homestead claim. He needed to take up residence on the land, but his business demanded so much of his time that he only managed to cut and drag in one or two logs a week for his log cabin. He needed almost fifty logs for a single-room cabin. Still, he refused to consider canceling his Friday night Bible study. There were now five new Christians attending it, and they desperately needed his Scriptural encouragement in their lives. Suddenly Jim realized that he needed to be praying about the secular things in his life as well as the spiritual ones.

On Friday morning of the week that Jim began praying about his homesteading predicament a young woman came running into his establishment. The out-of-breath woman slipped quickly towards the back of the building, obviously looking for a place to hide. Seeing the terror on her face as she looked back towards the door, Jim jerked his head toward the door of his living quarters. She had scarcely slammed the door behind her when a rough-looking man came barging through the front door.

“Where’d that woman go?” he demanded of Jim.

“Excuse me?” Jim replied, coming to stand before the rogue.

“I said, ‘Where did that woman go?’” the man repeated pointedly, grabbing Jim by the front of the shirt.

“Mister,” Jim commanded, “You take your hands off of me and explain what you are in here for.”

When the man hesitated, Jim shoved his right hand against the bully's throat, pinning him against the wall. He held him there until his face began to turn blue and his hands dropped to his side. Loosening his grip to where the man could breathe, Jim demanded why he wanted the woman.

"She owes me twenty-five dollars for bringing her from Denver to the Madame," the man replied. "She took one look at the Madame's establishment and bolted. The Madame won't pay me if the girls don't stay."

Suddenly the woman was beside Jim. "You told me you were bringing me to a hotel where I could work as a housekeeper," she accused angrily. "Instead you brought me to that disgraceful place and tried to force me to stay there with that awful woman. Now I have no means to get back to Denver, even."

"She ain't that bad," the currier replied. "Yer the first woman I've brung ta 'er over the years that ain't been glad ta git the job."

"Hold it!" Jim cut in. "You are telling me that the Madame pays you to recruit women to work for her, and to bring them to her establishment?"

"Yep," the man replied proudly, "An' it's an easy livin'."

"But you tell them you're bringing them to a job in a hotel?"

"Sure," the man guffawed at his own cleverness. "Don't a lot a' men spend the night there?"

"Suddenly Jim tightened his pressure on the man's throat again-- to the point where he was wheezing. "Ma'am," he said urgently, "Run down the street to the jail house and get the sheriff. If he's not there, he'll be across the street getting his breakfast. Hurry, before I actually hurt this piece of scum."

The sheriff was at Jim's place within three or four minutes. After hearing the Jim's accusation, he tied the man's hands behind his back and marched him off to the jail.

"What am I being arrested for?" The man objected.

"For fraud and trafficking in human beings," the Sheriff replied.

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When the man was gone, the woman turned to Jim. "Thanks for saving me from this humiliating situation. I'd rather starve than stay there--even as a housekeeper, which was never their intention anyway."

"Ma'am," Jim responded, noting the gauntness of her otherwise pleasant face. "You told that man that you had no way back to Denver. I can supply you with a railroad ticket and enough money to travel comfortably, if you'll take it."

"Thanks, Mister, but what's the use. I walked the streets of Denver for over a month without finding a suitable job for a Christian woman. I guess it was pure desperation that finally made me come with that disgusting man. You wouldn't have a job for me, would you?"

"I don't exactly handle goods that women are generally familiar with," Jim began to hedge.

"You might be surprised," she answered. "I've been helping Dad at the mine ever since Mom died until he was killed in an avalanche last winter. Then a couple of men jumped our claim and I had to run for my life. I'm knowledgeable about mining and mining equipment, as well as harness and leather goods," she continued with a glimmer of hope in her eyes. "Let me show you what I know about your stock"

Without waiting for an answer, the woman began to explain how the various pieces of mining equipment Jim had on display were used. She interspersed short anecdotes on amazing successes and tragic misuses of the equipment that held Jim spellbound. She had a good knowledge of leather and harness goods as well, often mentioning the brand simply by the appearance. She was weak on farming equipment and lumbering tools, and knew nothing at all about guns. "I've never fired one," she admitted, "but I can learn."

"Ma'am," Jim exclaimed enthusiastically, "I'm impressed." Then, handing her fifty dollars out of his cash drawer, he added, "Here's fifty dollars for you to live on while I try to figure out whether or not the details of hiring a woman can be worked out."

"I can't take that without earning it," she replied, handing it back towards him.

"Lady," he stated gently, "Your face shows the marks of genuine hunger. You are a Christian friend on the verge of starvation, and I would face the wrath of God if I failed to help you. Please take this as from the Lord Himself."

"OK." She relented, "but if you consider me a friend, please call me Pam."

"If you're Pam, I'm Jim. OK Pam?"

"Yes Jim," she agreed as they grinned amiably at each other.

By the way, Jim advised as she headed out the door, I'd recommend the Plainsman Hotel for quality food and clean rooms. It's where you found the sheriff this morning. I'll drop in to discuss the job with you tomorrow at breakfast time." But when Jim arrived at the Plainsman in the morning, Pam was not there.

Jim was confused. Had this woman been using him, or was she genuine? His gut feeling was that she was transparent. Something was wrong. After waiting nearly an hour, Jim finally asked the manager to check her room. The manager was back within a minute.

"There's been a fight up there," he reported. "There's some blood, and she's been abducted." Jim crossed the street to the sheriff's office, and found the lawman in a deep unrousable sleep. The prisoner was gone.

Jim rushed over to the president of the town council's house. Fortunately, he was home. "The sheriff has been drugged, the prisoner is gone, and his victim has been abducted," Jim explained.

"You'll have to take over until the sheriff wakes up," the man told Jim. "Do you swear to uphold the laws of this country and this community to the best of your ability?" He asked, holding out his Bible.

"I do," Jim answered, touching the book.

"Here's a deputy's badge, Jim," the councilman replied. "We'll take care of the sheriff. You try to find the abducted woman."

This was new ground for Jim. He forced himself to sit back and pray for wisdom. "Who would have abducted Pam?" he asked himself. "The Madame? The escaped prisoner? Both of them were implicated in the prisoner's fraud and human trafficking."

"The Madame seems too frail to abduct a girl who had worked a mine," Jim reasoned. "She would be the one that drugged the sheriff and freed the prisoner. He would be the one who abducted the girl. Where should he start looking for him?"

A quick check with the hostler showed the prisoner's horses and buggy were still in town. So were the Madame's. "Good, both the prime subjects are probably still in town, but where?"

As Jim kept turning the case over in his mind it finally struck him. If the Madame sprung the prisoner, it was to keep him from implicating her in his crimes against these women. She would certainly kill him herself if she hadn't done it already, or hire it done. She'd do away with Pam before she could testify as well. "Thank you, Lord," he breathed. "Can you help me find them before it's too late?"

Returning to the councilman's house, he found the others gathered with their president. They saw the logic of Jim's solution, and since there was no judge in the community, they issued Jim a "Warrant" to search the bawdy house. "Would one of you married men bring his wife along," Jim asked, blushing.

"Wise move," the councilmen agreed, choosing the oldest couple to accompany Jim. The men armed themselves before the trio headed to the bawdy house.

"Come in, Jim," the Madame invited him sarcastically. "It's been several weeks since you've been here."

"I've never been here, and you know it," Jim retorted angrily. "But we are here on official business to search your place," he added, showing his deputy sheriff's badge.

"I knew you couldn't stay away forever," she mocked, "but come in and satisfy yourself that no one is here."

"Don't worry, Jim," the councilman's wife whispered to him. "We know that you don't even enter the drinking establishments."

The group searched the establishment thoroughly, finding no evidence of scuffling or of the missing people. Discouragement showed on Jim's face as he trudged over to the sheriff's office. A coarsely made up young woman awaited him there.

"Sheriff," she started hesitantly. "I'm one of the Madame's girls. I was brought here on a promise of a laundry job at a hotel. When I tried to refuse the Madame's demands, I was blindfolded and shoved into a root cellar a very short distance from the back door of the establishment. I was held there for several days, until I yielded for fear of my life. Now I'm such a sinner that I'm headed straight for the



gates of hell, but maybe this will help you save that new recruit. She looked absolutely horrified when she saw where she had been brought.”

Jim gathered several armed business men into a small posse as he returned to the bawdy house. Starting from the back door, they searched the yard without finding a trace of the reported root cellar. As they returned to the back porch, one of the men remarked at how new the basket-weave wooden skirt around the porch looked. Suddenly they were pulling it away, and there, under the porch, were the stairs leading down into the cellar.

When the cellar doors were thrown open, both the victims were found thoroughly bound and gagged. The escaped prisoner had so many deep scratches across his face that the searchers burst out into frank laughter. Pam had a black eye and a horribly bruised face. Her legs had fallen asleep from her cramped position, so Jim picked her up and carried her up the steps. The way the relieved woman clung to him made him want to shelter her from ever getting hurt again.

As Jim reluctantly relinquished his hold on Pam, something clicked in his mind. He tore around to the front of the building, just in time to intercept the Madame as she rushed out her front door. She put up a fight, and he finally had to tackle her and hold her for help in tying her up. Since they could scarcely put her in the single-celled jail with a male prisoner, they put her in the root cellar until they could come up with a more civilized arrangement where she would be secure. Within an hour Jim’s personal quarters had been emptied of everything but a single bed and a chair. The shackled Madame was housed there under both male and female guards.

That night the bawdy house burned to the ground. Only a torrential thunderstorm kept the fire from spreading throughout the business district. The next morning the body of a young woman was found in the debris of the fire. She appeared to be the one who had told Jim of the root cellar.

When the Madame was moved to more appropriate quarters, Jim hired Pam, turning his personal quarters over to her. He began sleeping on his claim, in his Conestoga wagon. When Pam was comfortable running the store, Jim began to assemble his logs in earnest. He had to have a home there as soon as possible, and he wanted it big enough for a wife. He had the perfect one in mind.

Two weeks after the fire the Sheriff arrested a member of Rev. Lawrence’s church for arson and murder. The man confessed, showing little repentance. “It was time someone got rid of it,” he maintained.

The evening after the arrest was made, Rev. Lawrence came by to talk to Jim. “Jim,” he acknowledged, “I refused to listen to your request for a prayerful solution to the bawdy house. All that my hateful ranting and raving accomplished was to incite one of my parishioners to burn it down, causing an incidental murder. And the problem had already been solved the Lord’s way--through prayer. I’m leaving the ministry for a teaching career. Could you do the preaching for us for a few weeks until my replacement arrives from the East?”

“Sure, Pastor,” Jim agreed, giving the man a big hug. “I hope he’ll be good at funerals and marriages and other such gruesome festivities.”

“I’m sure he’ll be able to handle your immediate needs,” the minister remarked with twinkling eyes.